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ABSTRACT

The goal of gifted and talented education in South Carolina is to identify and nurture potential through the development of specialized curriculum offerings modified and adapted to meet the unique learning styles, learning rates, interests, abilities, and needs of gifted and talented students. An appropriate program for gifted and talented students reflects modification of four major components: content, process, learning environment, and student outcomes and products. This publication delineates the fundamental principles for modifying or differentiating curriculum in each of these four areas. A final section highlights the need for a coordinated staff development plan addressing the four areas. (JDD)

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South Carolina Curriculum Framework for Gifted and Talented Academic Programs

South Carolina Department of Education

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South Carolina Curriculum Framework for Gifted and Talented Academic Programs

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1990

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Introduction

Gifted and talented students, like other groups in the general school population, possess unique potential and needs which can only be addressed through modification of the regular curriculum. The goal of gifted and talented education in South Carolina is to identify and nurture potential through the development of specialized curriculum offerings modified and adapted to meet the unique learning styles, learning rates, interests, abilities, and needs of gifted and talented students.

A modified or differentiated instructional program includes elements that are different from and some that are similar to the regular curriculum. Some aspects of the regular curriculum need to be compacted in order that others, unique to the gifted and talented population, may be added. An appropriate program for gifted and talented students reflects modification of content (what is taught), process (how it is taught), learning environment (the setting in which instruction occurs), and student outcomes and products (the culmination of student learning). This publication delineates the fundamental principles for modifying or differentiating curriculum for academically gifted and talented students.

Rapidly increasing knowledge regarding developmental patterns, learning styles, and appropriate program provisions necessitates ongoing staff development for the teachers of gifted and talented students. The final segment of this publication is included to highlight the need for a coordinated staff development plan addressing the four major components of a differentiated curriculum: content, process, learning environment, and student products. Such a plan is crucial to the success of a district's gifted and talented program. Staff development activities must be ongoing, well-planned, and related to assessed needs.

This publication is intended to provide direction to school districts and individual schools in planning and refining curriculum offerings for students identified as academically gifted and talented. School districts may also use the document to promote public understanding of the purpose and importance of providing appropriate academic experiences for students with high intellectual abilities. Community support groups, higher education, business and cultural organizations, parents, classroom teachers, and local school boards are all potential audiences for the publication. As a result of increased understanding of appropriate programming for the gifted and talented, each identified student should have a better opportunity to achieve intellectual growth and high scholastic achievement.

Content Differentiation

THE CORE CURRICULUM IS BOTH COMPACTED AND EXTENDED TO ADDRESS THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED AND TALENTED LEARNERS.

- Preassessment and curriculum compacting are used to promote rapid, efficient learning of essential skills and information about core curriculum concepts.
- Interdisciplinary units of study provide opportunities for students to work with core concepts and skills at the application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation levels.
- Expansion of the core curriculum includes extended skills, processes, and understandings needed to study topics, issues, and problems in depth.

CURRICULUM CONTENT FOCUSES ON MAJOR CONCEPTS, METHODS, PROCESSES, AND ATTITUDES ESSENTIAL TO THE INVESTIGATION OF REAL PROBLEMS AND ISSUES.

- Problem definition, pattern recognition, and formation of concepts and generalizations are primary considerations in the organization of content.
- Students are taught processes of critical and creative thinking, problem solving, decision-making, research, and study skills and are provided opportunities to apply these processes in the investigation of problems, issues, and themes.
- Students are taught the technology of a variety of media so they can communicate their findings effectively to appropriate audiences.
- The curriculum is structured so students develop responsibility and skills of effective leadership and citizenship.

THE CURRICULUM PROVIDES A WIDE VARIETY OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

- The curriculum provides opportunities to work in-depth within an academic discipline or disciplines as well as opportunities for interdisciplinary studies integrating concepts and methodologies from several disciplines.
- Opportunities for students to choose topics, problems, areas of study, resources, and methodology are provided in the curriculum.
- Gifted and talented students learn the methods of research and investigation used by professionals in the field under study.
- Independent and group investigations of real problems and issues utilizing multiple resources, including both primary and secondary sources, take precedence over factual memorization and the sole reliance on textbooks.
- Curriculum content includes opportunities for students to learn about the nature of giftedness and the contributions to society from gifted and talented individuals.

Process Differentiation

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY THE TEACHER ARE DESIGNED TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS AS INDEPENDENT LEARNERS.

These include

Mastery of research skills and techniques;
Organizational skills such as goal setting, scheduling, record keeping;
Problem solving techniques;
Communication skills;
Study skills.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY THE TEACHER ARE DESIGNED TO PROMOTE STUDENTS' USE OF HIGHER ORDER THINKING (COGNITIVE).

These include

Complex and abstract reasoning at the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation levels;
Questioning strategies focusing on open endedness;
Problem seeking as well as problem solving;
Predicting, forming hypotheses, collecting data, verifying data, and drawing supportable conclusions.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY THE TEACHER ARE DESIGNED TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVITY (CREATIVE).

These include

Multiple opportunities to be creative;
Instruction in creative or divergent thinking processes: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration;
Encouragement of original ideas and products.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES SELECTED SHOULD ENCOURAGE UNDERSTANDING OF SELF AND OTHERS (AFFECTIVE).

These include

Analysis of self as an individual and as a member of a group;
Opportunities to work cooperatively and to exercise leadership skills;
Appreciation of similarities and differences between oneself and others;
Learning how to modify personal and group behavior.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES PROMOTE THE USE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

These include involving the student in

Communicating ideas to others clearly and accurately;
Interpreting and presenting data through a wide range of media.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES INVOLVE THE USE OF LOCAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES.

These strategies may include involving students in

Mentor programs;
Field Experiences;
Cooperative research projects with businesses and/or higher education.

THE TEACHER FUNCTIONS AS A FACILITATOR OF LEARNING AND A MANAGER OF RESOURCES.

Characteristics of teachers of the gifted and talented include

- Intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm for learning;
- Sense of humor;
- High degree of empathy;
- High level of energy, enthusiasm, and resourcefulness;
- Openness to innovation and acceptance of divergent, creative thinking.

Teachers of the gifted and talented are prepared to

- Provide a learning structure in which students are active participants;
- Provide a balance between expository and inquiry approaches;
- Provide an environment in which continuous learning is valued and sought;
- Provide a climate encouraging creativity and appropriate intellectual risk taking;
- Facilitate students' independence and development of personal responsibility for their own learning;
- Demonstrate content expertise in at least one discipline;
- Demonstrate a continuing development of their own knowledge base;
- Seek training in specific ways to differentiate instruction and increase awareness of the cognitive, creative, and affective needs of gifted and talented students.

UNIQUELY DEVELOPED SETS OF STANDARDS DEFINE A POSITIVE CLIMATE FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED CLASSROOMS.

These standards should ensure that students are

- Given a major role in making decisions about their own learning;
- Actively involved throughout the learning experience;
- Given a wide range of choices for expressing what they know and how they feel;
- Provided with opportunities to pursue their interests in an in-depth manner.

OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROVIDED FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS TO INTERACT WITH THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL PEERS AS WELL AS THEIR INTELLECTUAL PEERS.

A VARIETY OF INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPINGS MEETS THE UNIQUE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF ACADEMICALLY GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS.

The instructional groups used are appropriate for individual program components and objectives, needs of gifted and talented students, and available resources. Appropriate groupings might include

- Total class grouping for specific content;
- Cluster-grouping within classes;
- Cross grade level grouping;
- Independent study;
- Resource room;
- Accommodation for individuals with exceptional needs.

A WIDE VARIETY OF MULTIPLE RESOURCES PROVIDES APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS.

Resources beyond the school setting extend the learning environment by providing additional educational opportunities. Such resources might include

Community agencies;
Cultural institutions;
Industrial or environmental sites;
Colleges and universities;
Experts in various fields (mentors);
Specialized facilities or equipment within the school setting;
Field studies;
Cooperative research projects;
Regional, state, and national agencies.

Differentiation of Student Outcomes and Products

STUDENT OUTCOMES AND PRODUCTS ARE THE CULMINATION OF LEARNING AND REFLECT GROWTH IN COGNITIVE, CREATIVE, AND AFFECTIVE AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM.

STUDENT OUTCOMES AND PRODUCTS ARE BOTH TANGIBLE (REPORTS, DISPLAYS, VIDEOS, ETC.) AND INTANGIBLE (NEW CONCEPTS AND ABILITIES).

A NUMBER OF ELEMENTS ARE INVOLVED IN THE PLANNING OF STUDENT OUTCOMES AND PRODUCTS.

These elements include

Joint planning between teacher and student;
Individual planning by student, allowing for choice of outcomes and/or form of products;
Opportunities to create, invent, and go into depth in areas of individual interest;
Investigation of real problems, enabling students to become producers and disseminators of new knowledge and ideas;
Provision for the utilization of a variety of learning styles and modalities in product development.

APPROPRIATE AUDIENCES FOR STUDENT OUTCOMES AND PRODUCTS ARE MADE AVAILABLE.

These might include

Peers;
Publications;
Community groups;
Professional groups;
Political groups.

EVALUATION OF STUDENT OUTCOMES AND PRODUCTS IS VARIED AND MULTI-DIMENSIONAL.

Appropriate and specific criteria for product evaluation are established during the planning phase by the student and/or teacher;
Self-evaluation, peer-evaluation, and/or teacher evaluation should be utilized as appropriate.
In subject-based programs (science, social studies, etc.) where grading is mandatory, student performance is evaluated by appropriate and specific criteria. The criteria should be developed with input from students and final expectations communicated in print to students. In a gifted and talented student population, it is not unusual for the majority of students to receive an "A."

Staff Development

A STAFF DEVELOPMENT PLAN, INCLUDING BOTH SHORT RANGE AND LONG RANGE GOALS, IS DEVELOPED AND INCLUDED IN THE DISTRICT'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT IS PROVIDED FOR A VARIETY OF PROFESSIONAL AUDIENCES.

These include

- Teachers of the gifted and talented;
- Regular classroom teachers;
- Principals;
- Guidance personnel;
- Coordinators and supervisors;
- Content specialists;
- Other central office staff.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT INCLUDES A BACKGROUND OF GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GIFTEDNESS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION.

Specific content includes

- Characteristics and identification of gifted and talented students;
- Psychological and developmental needs of the gifted and talented;
- Need for and concept of differentiated programs;
- Development of appropriate curriculum;
- Teaching strategies for gifted and talented students;
- Administrative alternatives and program options;
- Program implementation, evaluation, and revision.

THE STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PROVIDES A VARIETY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

These might include

- Workshops, seminars and institutes;
- University or inservice courses;
- Conferences;
- Observation of exemplary programs and interaction with others directly involved in gifted and talented education;
- Structured classroom observation with feedback and follow-up support for the teacher;
- Independent study.